Impact of price rise on common man

†*233. SHRI AJAY MAROO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have paid attention to the constant rise in the prices of foodgrains and other commodities along with its impact on the common man;

(b) the assessment of Government in this regard; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to control the price rise?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) Annual inflation rate based on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) for the week ending February 18, 2006 for all commodities was 4.34 per cent against 4.89 per cent during the corresponding week last year (week ending February 19, 2005). The inflation rate for primary articles at 5.86 per cent was significantly higher than 0.71 per cent last year. A major part of increase in the primary articles is attributable to increase in the prices of food-grains, which was 7.26 per cent for the week ending on February 18,2006 as against 1.29 per cent in the corresponding week of last year.

Government is concerned about the price increase of various essential commodities and undertakes measures as may be required to contain the same. The anti-inflationary policies of the Government in the recent past included fiscal and monetary discipline; rationalization of excise and import duties to lighten the burden on the poor; freeze on Central issue prices under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) for wheat and rice; import of wheat to augment supply in the Southren zone; and regular monitoring of retail and wholesale prices of essential commodities.

Losses due to cancellation of flights

*234. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that almost all the airlines are incurring heavy losses every year due to cancellation of flights because of heavy fog;

(b) if so, the number of flights cancelled due to fog during the last three years; and

(c) the estimated loss incurred by the airlines due to cancellation of flights during the above said period?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.